United Nations S/PV.4507 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4507th meeting

Thursday, 4 April 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Lavrov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mrs. Mahouve Same
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Fall
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Mauritius	Mr. Jingree
	Mexico	Ms. Lajous
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Singapore	Mr. Yap
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

Food aid in the context of conflict settlement: Afghanistan and other crisis areas

Briefing by Ms. Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the World Food Programme.

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02-31702 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.10 p.m.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this important debate. My delegation greatly appreciates the valuable contribution of the World Food Programme, which strives to make a difference in the lives of millions of human beings throughout the world. I am honoured to express Bulgaria's great admiration for Ms. Catherine Bertini, and to recognize her remarkable work during her two terms as Executive Director of the Programme. She has been able to reorganize and modernize the World Food Programme, making it more effective than ever. Bulgaria would like to thank her warmly for that.

We support the newly developed strategy to mobilize resources for the World Food Programme with a view to improving the predictability of long-term contributions. We are pleased with the partnership of principal donors, as well as with that of non-traditional contributors. We also hope that the trend towards increased resources for the Programme will continue.

My second observation concerns the need for early warning and preventive action. The international community must intervene at the right time to mobilize awareness about the need for a donor response adequate to meet the food needs of vulnerable people. The experience of the World Food Programme in Africa in the last few years has proven that when resources are provided on time, we can avert a crisis of vast proportions and fraught with potentially tragic consequences.

It is clear that the needs caused by the proliferation of conflicts — sometimes aggravated by drought and other natural disasters — are so huge that they cannot be covered by a single organization. The partnership established among the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Health Organization is a good example in that regard. Our delegation would like in particular to stress the cooperation that should take place at the operational level in the field, as well as joint activities with non-governmental organizations.

Unfortunately, in many conflicts humanitarian aid does not reach those who desperately need it, and humanitarian personnel are used as targets. The Council must act, and must take appropriate measures when access is refused, especially when it comes to freedom of movement in the areas concerned, including through targeted sanctions.

Bulgaria supports the World Food Programme's new approaches aimed at gaining access to victims of armed conflict and at providing them with food assistance. We are also pleased with the establishment of the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit, which makes it possible to identify the areas to which food assistance must be directed. At the same time, we are concerned about the decrease in resources for development efforts. The current levels are the lowest in 23 years.

I would also like to say a few words about the categories of people who are particularly vulnerable: women, children, refugees, displaced persons and populations deprived of means of subsistence. Our commitment to them must be translated into a better and more secure reality. The Council and humanitarian organizations must step up their efforts to strengthen the protection of such persons.

Mr. Fall (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Ms. Catherine Bertini and congratulate her on the work she has done as the head of the World Food Programme (WFP). In these 10 years under her dynamic leadership, we have seen the emergence of a new approach towards food assistance. It is indeed fortunate that the Russian presidency agreed to organize this dialogue with Ms. Bertini today, at a time when she is preparing to leave her post.

Today the link between food assistance and the settlement of conflict at all stages appears obvious. Had time allowed, we would have hoped to have more time with Ms. Bertini to deal not only with Afghanistan, but also with the subject in general throughout the world — a subject that is totally in sync with our work in the Council. For we are sure that today's meeting and the lessons we can learn from this dialogue will allow us to improve our approach in the area of the comprehensive settlement of conflicts.

There is no need to emphasize the fact that food assistance is a fundamental element in the prevention and settlement of conflicts, as well as in peace-building. It is also an effective component of

preventive diplomacy. It has been demonstrated on many occasions that meeting the food needs of certain populations — and for the most disadvantaged in particular — is an important element of prevention. Food assistance is also an important element in the stabilization of States.

The role of the United Nations in the area of assistance to the victims of conflict should be lauded, as it has made it possible to reduce delays in rendering assistance, increase the efficiency of international food aid and strengthen the means available to countries to avert or cope with emergency situations.

We appreciate the role that Ms. Bertini and the World Food Programme have played in the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. We also appreciate the cooperation established with other humanitarian institutions in the areas of alleviating crises, rehabilitation and community stability.

Coming from Africa, a continent that unfortunately continues to suffer from hunger and the consequences of numerous conflicts, and specifically from Guinea, which aside from its geographic situation has experienced a massive inflow of refugees and is therefore a major host country for refugees, I would like to make a few comments on the basis of Ms. Bertini's briefing to the Council today and on the basis of my own country's experience.

First, food assistance and the physical protection of disaster victims are two high-priority and inseparable elements of relief and assistance programmes.

Secondly, aid should take into account the eating habits of recipients. My delegation would encourage the WFP to buy more local products when providing such assistance. That would generate funds on the local level, foster the recovery and stabilization of local communities and reduce delivery delays.

Thirdly, the use of local personnel and local services would also generate additional value in terms of the recovery and development of communities.

My delegation places great value on the food aid provided by the World Food Programme, which, through its various projects, is effectively contributing to the recovery and development of communities. With that objective in mind, we stress the need to strengthen international coordination within the United Nations system and between it and other actors.

In the light of the magnitude and urgency of this task, everything possible must be done to promote the growth and effective mobilization of the financial resources that are required. Every step should also be taken to ensure the security of humanitarian personnel and the protection of United Nations personnel. We saw what happened in the case of the humanitarian personnel in Guinea who were affected during the rebel attacks in Masanta, which were universally deplored.

Finally, my delegation once again emphasizes that conflict prevention and peace-building efforts are the best means of resolving crises and helping in the recovery and stabilization of communities, and food aid plays a major role in that regard.

I would like to conclude by once again expressing our gratitude to Ms. Bertini for the work that she has done at the head of the World Food Programme and for her vision of the role of that body in general, and of food aid in particular, as an effective means of preventing and resolving conflict. I would like to convey our best wishes to her for continuing success in her career.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I would like to thank Ms. Bertini for her briefing, which impressed us a great deal. We heard not merely a report, but a very touching story of success. As the front-line agency in the United Nations system with the mandate to eliminate hunger, the World Food Programme (WFP) has, for many years, been doing its utmost to provide emergency food aid to those States and people that are suffering, and has helped to alleviate humanitarian crises. Whenever there is a food crisis caused by a natural or man-made disaster, whether in Africa, Latin America or Asia, the staff of the WFP — including Ms. Bertini — are always involved. Their timely assistance has not only saved many lives, but lent strong support to efforts aimed at conflict resolution in the countries and regions concerned. It is precisely for that reason that the work of the Programme has won the widespread praise and commendation of the international community.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has been an issue of common concern to the international community for a long time. WFP has overcome various difficulties and delivered a great deal of food aid and other assistance, thereby helping to alleviate the humanitarian situation there.

In the light of the changed situation on the ground after the establishment of the Afghan Interim Administration, the WFP has adjusted its mode of operation by shifting the focus of its work from relief to rehabilitation. In February this year, the WFP announced a $285 million assistance package for Afghanistan to provide much-needed food. But the provision of food aid will also, inter alia, help to stabilize the civil service, create job opportunities for women, provide education for children and assist in the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

It goes without saying that, with such a strategic adjustment, WFP will not only save Afghanistan from a humanitarian catastrophe, but contribute to the rebuilding of that country and to lasting peace there. We appreciate and support that adjustment.

In conclusion, we would like to pay tribute to the staff of WFP, who have been working very hard in Afghanistan, as well as in other hot spots throughout the world. I pay tribute to Ms. Bertini for her outstanding, decade-long leadership of the agency. I believe that her achievement and her leadership cannot be praised too highly, as she and WFP have, indeed, done a great deal to spare people from suffering. It is our hope that her example of selflessness and dedication will continue to prevail in WFP after she leaves her post.

I would like to conclude by saying once again how grateful we are to her. She will be sorely missed by the international community. I wish her great success in her new career.

Mr. Jingree (Mauritius): I would like to thank Ms. Bertini for her very useful and informative briefing this morning. Indeed, the information which she shared with us about the positive role that food aid plays in alleviating international crises and in the recovery and stability of affected countries was a real eye-opener. We commend the exemplary role of the World Food Programme (WFP) and other agencies, non-governmental organizations and bilateral donors in extending food aid to the needy, sometimes in very difficult and dangerous situations, as mentioned by Ms. Bertini herself.

Empirical evidence convincingly proves that the lack of a food aid programme in a disaster area in the right place and at the right moment can aggravate the humanitarian crisis and impede the recovery of the State, thereby threatening its political and social stability.

My delegation wishes to place on record its appreciation for the outstanding contribution of Ms. Catherine Bertini, the outgoing Executive Director of the WFP, and for the formidable job that she has done during her mandate over the past 10 years. Her vision of a world in which all have access at all times to the nourishment they need has paid fruitful dividends. Indeed, her contribution to the advancement of women and children, particularly in the Horn of Africa, as well as in other parts of the world, will always be remembered. We wish her every success in her future career and professional life. We also congratulate Mr. James Morris on his appointment as the new Executive Director, and we pledge our unqualified support to him and his staff.

We would like to make a few comments. First, access to food is one of the basic needs of a human being. A situation in which food is absent or denied can quickly lead to social instability, conflict and, eventually, crisis. The shortage of food should not be allowed to be a factor in further aggravating existing conflict. We therefore need to ensure access to food, particularly in remote areas, so as to avoid the intensification of conflict. In this regard, we encourage the WFP to continue to work towards this end.

Secondly, at a time of conflict, warlords may create artificial shortages of food so as to cause people to rebel against the central authority. We would like to ask Ms. Bertini what the WFP does to deal with such cases of artificial shortages of food.

Thirdly, in Afghanistan the WFP has been extremely positive in contributing to the alleviation of the plight of the needy, not only in situations of conflict, but also during natural disasters. My delegation commends the prompt response of the WFP in delivering some 552 tonnes of food aid to northern Afghanistan after the recent devastating earthquakes.

This morning, the delegation of Mexico emphasized the need for coordination in the activities of the humanitarian agencies. Perhaps Ms. Bertini could enlighten us as to whether any coordinating mechanism is in place with other agencies regarding the distribution of food in or outside Kabul.

Fourthly, we are aware of the problems arising from the lack of security in conflict situations where

WFP and other agencies work. The Council is not insensitive to those problems. Mauritius, as a Council member, will continue to appeal for improved security and access for the personnel of WFP and other agencies concerned with humanitarian activities.

Finally, we would like to express our full support for the important work being carried out by WFP.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): Ireland thanks Catherine Bertini for the work that the World Food Programme (WFP) is doing in so many crisis situations and for her own outstanding contribution as the head of WFP since 1993, including her highly persuasive efforts to engage key donors. In this latter regard, Ms. Bertini has, I think, exemplified diplomatic skill according to one of its traditional definitions — that is, in getting what you need from other parties, you make those parties feel that it is they who have gained from the transaction.

At last week's public Council meeting on Afghanistan, I noted the remarkable statistic that WFP will be providing assistance to up to 8.8 million people in Afghanistan in the coming months. That is but one example of WFP's extraordinary successes, some of which were summarized earlier in our debate. We also appreciate the work of WFP in addressing the more structural causes of food insecurity in Afghanistan; investment in women's bakeries and the Food for Work and Food for Education programmes are excellent examples. We look forward now to the establishment of real food stability in the country as the relief and reconstruction effort takes hold.

We particularly welcome the efforts of WFP to address the specific needs of schoolchildren. The campaign to assist up to a million schoolchildren by the end of the school year is an essential investment in Afghanistan's long-term health and development.

The work of WFP in Afghanistan has been essential to the success to date of the Bonn process in very practical ways, including through the provision of food supplements to civil servants in addition to their wages, but also in contributing in a very tangible way to the return to more normal living conditions for millions of Afghans.

The World Food Programme is a very important partner for IrelandAid. WFP consistently receives a very large proportion of Ireland's total commitment to emergency humanitarian assistance, and in the past two years we have allocated a substantial part of our humanitarian budget to WFP. That reflects our confidence in the ability of WFP to deliver emergency food aid efficiently and effectively. In the context of the steady expansion of Ireland's aid programme, we look forward to further deepening our relationship with WFP.

Today, we wish Ms. Bertini every success in the future.

Mr. Williamson (United States): I join other speakers in welcoming Catherine Bertini to the Security Council again.

It has been my pleasure to know Ms. Bertini for almost 20 years. We both hail from Chicago. She served an outstanding tenure as an Assistant Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture prior to becoming an international civil servant. Ms. Bertini has been an outstanding public servant in all her positions. She is a strong leader and a person with an effective and good heart. She has done an outstanding job during her 10 years at the helm of the World Food Programme (WFP), bringing assistance to some of the world's neediest people.

The United States supports the World Food Programme through its contributions, both in dollars and in food. Overall donor support to WFP from 1992 to 2001 totalled $15.54 billion. Of that total, the United States contributed $6.34 billion, or 41 per cent.

While WFP provides food in all the areas where there are peacekeeping operations, it is also present in many places where peacekeepers are not. The dedicated men and women who work for WFP endure difficult and dangerous conditions, bringing lifesaving food aid to hungry people, mostly women and children, in war-torn regions. These needy people are often internally displaced or refugees, uprooted from their homes. Fighting makes it impossible for them to plant and harvest their own crops. The deprivation that war brings to civilians in Angola, Afghanistan, western Africa and the Congo would be unimaginably higher if not for the valiant efforts of WFP to feed hungry people in those places.

We commend WFP for focusing on feeding women and children, those mostly likely to starve in a crisis situation. In just one example of the vital difference WFP makes in the lives of women and children, the women's bakeries run by WFP in Afghanistan, as described by Ms. Bertini earlier,

provide a livelihood and restore dignity to women who would otherwise be reduced to begging for food for their families.

The basic needs of civilians affected by armed conflict do not end when a ceasefire agreement is signed. Ms. Bertini has often pointed that out, and nowhere is it more true than in Afghanistan today. The fighting may have stopped, but homes need to be rebuilt, landmines must be removed, damaged irrigation systems must be repaired and crops must be planted. In other post-conflict countries, needs are similar. The challenge to the international community is to find the mechanisms and resources to address those needs. Our shared experience with both natural and man-made disasters tells us that we must focus on prevention, preparation and reducing risks beforehand.

In Afghanistan, the international community has recognized the need to move from relief to recovery with ongoing international engagement. Despite significant contributions of food aid from the United States, WFP is facing a significant shortfall in its latest emergency appeal for Afghanistan. The United State calls on all donors to work closely together so that we can close that gap.

In Monterrey, President Bush announced that the United States is doubling its official development assistance contributions within the next three years. Some of those resources may be available for helping post-conflict countries recover. The United States Agency for International Development, USAID, has restructured to coordinate humanitarian assistance more effectively in post-conflict situations. In order to increase food security in poor countries, American development efforts will have more of a focus on agricultural activities.

The United States thanks Executive Director Catherine Bertini and her staff for their extraordinary efforts over the past decade to advance both WFP's internal reforms and the overall United Nations reform agenda. Again, we wish to compliment her for her considerable accomplishments and success with WFP.

The United States will continue to work with WFP under the new leadership of James Morris to ensure that the nutritional needs of people in dire circumstances are met, and we look forward to working closely with other members of the international community to meet that goal.

Once again, thank you, Ms. Bertini, for a job well done.

Mrs. Mahouve Same (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): I should also like to thank Ms. Bertini for her thorough briefing on the activities of the World Food Programme (WFP) throughout the world, particularly in Afghanistan.

Cameroon pays vibrant tribute to Ms. Bertini for the noble and commendable work she has done in the context of her mandate as Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP). My delegation also joins others in singing her praises.

Twenty years of continuous conflict have made Afghanistan one of the world's main sources of refugees and displaced persons. Today, more than 8 million Afghans need assistance to survive. Almost 20 per cent of the neediest are children under the age of five. Since 11 September, more than 135,000 Afghans have fled to Pakistan in search of a haven of peace and security. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has established refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran. The WFP currently feeds more than 1 million Afghans in their own country.

As everyone knows, the crisis in Afghanistan has also affected populations that were not directly touched by the fighting in the northern part of that country. The public infrastructure and organizations that provided most basic services have collapsed. Given the exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis, and in the context of coordinating and harmonizing the various humanitarian actors, we are pleased to note the multidimensional activities of the WFP, the importance of which has been proven. We point in particular to the provision of emergency assistance to displaced persons and to the assistance given to many poor citizens by the women's bakeries of Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif, which provide some of the rare job opportunities available to women in Afghanistan, as Ms. Bertini noted this morning. We also welcome the WFP's interest in defending basic rights, in particular those of women, who, until recently, were not allowed to work outside the health sector. Education for girls is among a country's most lucrative investments, since it is the key to women's autonomy.

The delegation of Cameroon welcomes the national food aid programme recently launched by the WFP for Afghan school children. The objective of that

programme — which aims not only at providing food aid to the school children of that country, but also at encouraging them to attend school — is most commendable. We should also point out that the programme also provides nutritional incentives to teachers and to those who help to rebuild schools.

As regards the security of humanitarian personnel, there is good reason to welcome the efforts of the WFP to integrate security matters into its training and planning activities.

The staff of the WFP works in difficult and dangerous conditions. We must therefore pay tribute to all those who, in gruelling and sometimes life-threatening conditions, are striving to help those in need.

With regard to inter-agency cooperation in the field, my delegation welcomes the close cooperation between the WFP, the United Nations Children's Fund, UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. This cooperation is a practical demonstration of the concept of a United Nations logistical centre. We must recall that humanitarian interventions have become increasingly complex and represent major challenges, especially when they involve the massive and sudden displacement of people. In that context, the protection of refugees and displaced persons is increasingly a question of partnership.

Finally, I express Cameroon's concern over the problem of guaranteeing access to humanitarian assistance and the responsibilities of States therein. Although it is primarily the responsibility of States to ensure that refugees, displaced persons and other vulnerable people affected by conflict are protected, as the Secretary-General so clearly stressed in his report on protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees in document S/1998/883, refugees, displaced persons and other victims of conflict are entitled under international law to enjoy the protection of international assistance when national authorities cannot provide such protection. However, if that right is to have any meaning to those who supposedly enjoy it, the recipients must have effective access to the providers of protection and assistance. In that respect, my country appeals to all Member States to respect the recognized provisions of international humanitarian law and to facilitate the work of aid agencies striving to reach vulnerable populations and to help to restore safe conditions for refugees and displaced persons.

I cannot conclude without once again congratulating Ms. Bertini on behalf of the Cameroonian Government and offering her our best wishes for the rest of her career.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Russian Federation.

The activities of the World Food Programme (WFP) are of particular significance. In truly helping to resolve the problem of poverty, they contribute to the elimination of the breeding grounds of conflict, terror and extremism. The enormous importance of the WFP's work in Afghanistan is obvious in a country where food aid is urgently needed by some 9 million individuals and where half of the children are suffering from chronic malnutrition.

The task now before the WFP and other humanitarian agencies in Afghanistan is twofold. What is required is not merely to feed people, but also to assure a smooth and harmonious transition from an emergency humanitarian situation to recovery and development. It is evident from Ms. Bertini's statement that the leadership of the WFP clearly understands this problem. Of great significance here will be the coordination of efforts of United Nations agencies in Afghanistan, other bilateral and multilateral donors and other partners participating in the humanitarian operation. We are convinced that a leading role in ensuring such coordination must be played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Today's debate highlights once again the indissoluble link between those issues that the Security Council is called upon to address and the tasks of the international humanitarian community in easing the suffering of vulnerable populations in conflict zones. One reflection of that link is the growing involvement of the Security Council in the consideration of such issues as the protection of civilian populations in conflict conditions, the humanitarian aspects of sanctions, the protection of children in armed conflict and the consideration of humanitarian aspects in planning peacekeeping operations.

It is important that the Security Council discuss these issues not in a generic or abstract fashion, but as applied to specific crisis situations, as we are seeking

to do here today. We agree with the view expressed here earlier that food aid should in no instance be used as a tool for interference or for influencing the course of conflicts. Moreover, the need to improve cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council on these issues is becoming increasingly obvious, taking into account their prerogatives and the principles of interaction enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

I wish to say a few personal words to Ms. Bertini. She became the first woman in history to head the World Food Programme. For ten years now, she has energetically and productively worked in that post and has earned general respect and praise. We greatly appreciate her personal contribution to resolving global food problems, and express our sincere gratitude for her selfless work. We wish her our very best wishes for the future.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Ms. Catherine Bertini for a concluding statement, including answers to the questions that have been raised today.

Ms. Bertini: May I start where the President left off and say that this conversation that we are having today, following up on many of the humanitarian issues that the Council has discussed as they relate to peace and security, is extremely important, as the President has said. I know that those of us in the humanitarian community have been so happy that the Council has taken up these issues over the last few years, because they are so integral to the success of the Council's efforts on peace and security around the world.

On the Afghanistan questions, first there were a couple of specific questions from Singapore about resolution 1401 (2002). The establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) programme has been important for all of us in the humanitarian community. We worked closely with the Secretariat in its process of developing the procedures. We are working in close connection with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Brahimi, and working perhaps a bit differently from the way that the agencies have worked before, in an even more coordinated effort than has been the case in the past. In particular, Mr. Brahimi's deputy, Mr. Nigel Fisher, has been very helpful in terms of bringing all the humanitarian agencies together in a coordinated structure as part of the overall framework.

Of course, we work with the local authorities regarding their work, always committing ourselves to being sure that we are ending hunger and using food appropriately. If there is ever a possibility that food is not used appropriately in a particular area, or that local authorities are problematic, then we would revert to Mr. Brahimi for his help in trying to fix the problems that might exist.

Regarding some of the questions that Colombia raised about Afghanistan, we are distributing food not just in the major cities but all throughout the country. We are doing so with a network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which also connects with another question that I think Mauritius asked, about coordination. The World Food Programme works with more than 60 NGOs —most are local and some are international — in food distribution. Those NGOs have responsibilities throughout the country. So we do not distribute only in the cities. In fact, this is a very strong network that worked even during the last part of 2001. It has become much stronger now that communications and movement are a bit easier.

Regarding the military who are moving around in civilian clothes, I would like to make a couple of points. First, the military can offer tremendous capacities, particularly in logistics and engineering. Those kinds of activities have been extremely useful to humanitarian organizations. One example is a field military health centre set up by Jordan in Mazar-e-Sharif, which is extremely helpful to the people there. Other examples are mine clearing and bridge-building, so that humanitarian activities can be better operated. But we agree with those who say that military personnel should be clearly identified as military personnel.

I think one thing that is even more important than that, though, is that everyone working in Afghanistan supports the overall objectives of the Security Council and supports the overall intent of helping to support the central Government in Afghanistan.

When we look at lessons learned, we must consider in particular our dealings with non-State factions. We have to deal with non-State factions constantly, in Afghanistan and everywhere else where there are conflicts that have moved from an ideological basis to a more ethnic or religious nature, or conflicts

over material and property. This has so much increased the risk to staff security. It also means that we have to work with all of these people. That does not mean that we recognize their legal status, or any legal status, but we have to work with the people who are responsible, legitimately or not, for certain territories. Unless we do, we cannot effectively deliver humanitarian assistance. So that is something that is critically important.

Again, if we find situations where somebody is withholding food or access to food, that is when, if we cannot figure it out on a humanitarian level, we revert to a senior political person, a Special Representative of the Secretary-General or someone else, and even the Secretary-General if necessary, to try to fix the problem.

Coordination works very well in Afghanistan, not only with the NGOs but also, I should say, with all the United Nations agencies in that country, and I think it works well as a model.

On a few other questions that are not specifically related to Afghanistan, I would say first of all, yes, the World Food Programme is doing the best it can in Gaza. This was raised by the Syrian Ambassador. We are still distributing food to hospitals and to some of the orphanages and to people who otherwise have difficulty getting food. Transportation certainly is a challenge for all of the humanitarian workers in that region at this time.

There was a comment by Bulgaria about the decrease in development and Bulgaria's regret over this. We regret it too, very much. I did not concentrate on that here, because it was not the focus of this discussion. But I do hope that over the long term we can reverse the downward trend, not only with food aid but other kinds of aid, to support people who are desperately hungry solely because they are poor, and not because they live in a conflict zone or an area where there has been an extremely difficult natural disaster.

The purchase of local products was raised by Guinea. The WFP purchases $200 to $300 million a year of local agricultural production. We always purchase the maximum amount we can with the funds that we have available. As far as using local personnel, WFP has just over 8,000 staff members. Less than 10 per cent are international. More than 90 per cent are people hired in the countries where we work.

Finally, the United Kingdom had some comments about some very interesting approaches to food aid. I think that they were on point with practically all of those. We have had a long discussion with the United Kingdom about the use of food aid for development. As I said, WFP thinks that it is particularly important. But if we are moving to the point where we could talk about using food on a case-by-case basis, then I think that we may find times when food aid is useful in a development-type capacity. Certainly, WFP is committed to ensuring that the food that we use in all capacities goes to the most vulnerable in a transparent manner that can be monitored appropriately.

I again thank you, Sir, and Council members for taking on these important issues in the context of your overall work. I thank you for your kind comments about my successor, Mr. Morris, who is a fine man and who, I know, will lead WFP in an exemplary fashion. I am sure that he looks forward to working with you. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to be here in the very last hours of my last day to highlight the fine work done by the staff members of the World Food Programme throughout the world. I thank you for this opportunity. I thank you for your kind words and the tribute to me and to WFP. But especially I thank you for your political, moral and financial support to the work of the World Food Programme and to its mission to end hunger worldwide.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Bertini for her additional clarifications and for her kind words to the Security Council and to its members.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.